

2020 SAMHSA SOAR October e-News

Celebrate National Disability Employment Awareness Month With SAMHSA SOAR

October is [National Disability Employment Awareness Month](#) (NDEAM), sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor! This year's NDEAM theme is "Increasing Access and Opportunity," and celebrates the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the 75th anniversary of NDEAM.

Celebrate NDEAM with the DOL's [31 Days of NDEAM—What You Can Do!](#) Each day offers a new way to empower individuals with disabilities in the workplace. Activities include educating staff members about disability history, establishing an employee resource group, reviewing company policies, and more!

The SAMHSA SOAR TA Center is proud to celebrate NDEAM and promote employment for Supplemental Security Income (SSI)/and Supplemental Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) beneficiaries. The SAMHSA SOAR TA Center has assembled the [Employment Resources](#) page, which is full of work incentive resources, including the following:

- Selected articles from the SOAR TA Center Library
- Tools from the SOAR TA Center
- Social Security Administration (SSA) resources
- Supported employment resources

In addition to these resources, the SOAR TA Center is pleased to release two resources to the SOAR community in celebration of NDEAM—an issue brief and a webinar!

SOAR and Employment for SSI/SSDI Beneficiaries Issue Brief Re-release

The SAMHSA SOAR TA Center is pleased to release an update to the *SOAR and Employment for SSI/SSDI Beneficiaries* issue brief!

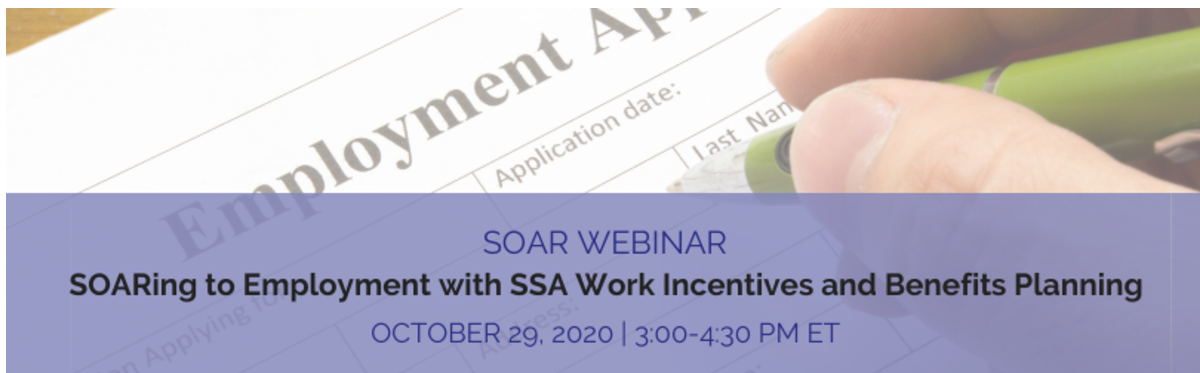
This issue brief covers the following topics:

- Misconceptions about employment and loss of disability benefits
- How earned income from employment affects SSI/SSDI benefits and Medicare/Medicaid coverage
- Employment resources and work incentives offered by SSA to current SSI/SSDI beneficiaries
- The role SOAR programs can play in connecting individuals to employment resources.



The 2020 updates to the issue brief include updated allowance amounts, Student Earned Income Exclusion, additional resources, and new ways beneficiaries can report their earnings to SSA.

Download the SOAR Issue Brief



SOARing to Employment with SSA Work Incentives and Benefits Planning Webinar

October 29, 2020, 3:00-4:30 p.m. ET

In this webinar, the SAMHSA SOAR TA Center, SOAR providers, employment experts, SSA representatives, and a SOAR beneficiary will share some myth-busting information about working while applying for and receiving SSA benefits. Presenters will provide basic information on SSA work incentives and how to access employment resources available to applicants and beneficiaries in their communities. You will also hear from a local SOAR provider who will share their experience providing SOAR and employment supports in the community. The SAMHSA SOAR TA Center will also share its revised issue brief, *SOAR and Employment for SSI/SSDI Beneficiaries*, and other employment-related tools and resources.

Learn More and Register

SOAR and Employment Comes Full Circle at the 11th Judicial Circuit Criminal Mental Health Project in Miami, Florida

Justin Volpe has been employed as a peer specialist with the 11th Judicial Circuit Criminal Mental Health Project in Miami, Florida, since 2008. As a certified peer recovery specialist, Justin is one of the first people program participants meet upon release from jail.

Justin Volpe was also the 11th Judicial Circuit Criminal Mental Health Project's (CMHP) first SOAR applicant. The CMHP SOAR team assisted with Justin's application, and he was approved for SSDI in the fall of 2007. Currently, Justin continues to succeed in his recovery from the experience of addiction and homelessness and to manage his mental health through treatment, medication, and work. Benefits acquisition plays a part in Justin's success.

He shared thoughts for people that may be receiving benefits who want to work, "If you have to take a little on at a time to get there, it's ok. Ease people back into work...it benefits the entire community. You don't have to be on it [Social Security] forever. Working is good for people...it's good for the community. People can work."

Read More About Justin's Story

Welcome New SOAR Liaison Sametra Polkah-Toe

Please join the SAMHSA SOAR TA Center in extending a hearty welcome to our new SOAR Liaison, Sametra Polkah-Toe! Before joining the SAMHSA SOAR TA Center, Sametra was a SOAR Local Lead in Buffalo, New York, for 3 years and assisted many individuals in her community with SOAR-assisted SSI/SSDI applications. She has experience leading a Home and Community Based Services team and is in the process of obtaining her Peer Specialist Certification.



In Sametra's new role at the SAMHSA SOAR TA Center, she will serve as a state liaison and is a subject matter expert in community mental health services and peer supports. Sametra can be reached at spolkahtoe@prainc.com. Welcome to the SAMHSA SOAR TA Center, Sametra! We are so happy to have you join us!

SOAR for American Indian and Alaska Native Communities

The SAMHSA SOAR TA Center is pleased to release a new infographic, *SOAR for American Indian and Alaska Native Communities*. This infographic provides an overview of how SOAR can make a difference in tribal communities. This infographic highlights the SOAR TA Center's three-step approach to SOAR implementation in American Indian and Alaska Native communities:

- Strategic Planning
- Training Leaders
- Technical Assistance

Download the new infographic today!



Download the Infographic



Sharing Our Successes

Michigan Community Leverages SOAR Outcomes for Success

Michigan Regional SOAR Navigator **Alisha Pennington** is using local SOAR data to create new impact reports highlighting the success of SOAR across the state! Using the SOAR for Communities Impact Tool, she has been able to demonstrate the financial benefit experienced by communities because of the number of SOAR-assisted claims completed by SOAR providers, the total monthly benefits awarded to individuals, and more!

Alisha collects data from the SOAR Online Application Tracking (OAT) program, completes some calculations, then inputs the data into the formatted tool. This data can then be shared with individual practitioners, agencies providing SOAR services, Continuum of Care or local planning bodies, and potential funders. This tool is a quick way to grab people's attention about how impactful SOAR is in their community.

First-Time SOAR Provider SOARs to Success in Washington, DC!

Maggie Rosenbloom from Howard University Hospital in Washington, DC, wrote in to share this wonderful success story:

"Robert was experiencing severe and persistent mental illness and other physical health conditions. He had been experiencing homelessness for almost 30 years. I worked with Robert on his SOAR-assisted disability benefit application—my first time helping someone apply; he had applied several times on his own in the past but was never approved and was never in a position to file an appeal.

Using the SOAR process was so valuable; it was so helpful to have a roadmap. Robert received his award letter less than 2 months after we submitted the application! Robert is very relieved to finally be approved and to know that he will have income moving forward."

Thanks so much for sharing this success story, Maggie!

Submit Your SOAR Success

**Sharing Our Successes stories are edited for brevity and clarity. All client names have been changed to protect anonymity.*

Events

SOARing Over Lunch Conference Calls

October 13, 2020, 1:00-2:00 p.m. ET

The next SOARing Over Lunch Conference Call will take place on October 13, 2020, at 1:00 p.m. ET! The SAMHSA SOAR TA Center hosts this series of informal monthly calls designed to help support SOAR efforts across the country. Participants can join to ask about any SOAR-related question they may have.

Get Social with the SAMHSA SOAR TA Center

Hear more about what SAMHSA SOAR is up to via [@samhsagov](#) on Twitter, [@samhsa](#) on Facebook, and [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#) on LinkedIn!

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🔗 **CASE MANAGERS:** Learn how to submit SSI/SSDI applications using the SOAR model with the SAMHSA SOAR TA Center's FREE Online Course! The Online Course can train you to connect children or adults who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and have a serious mental illness, medical impairment, and/or a co-occurring substance use disorder to SSI/SSDI benefits. <https://bit.ly/3hbmdaF>

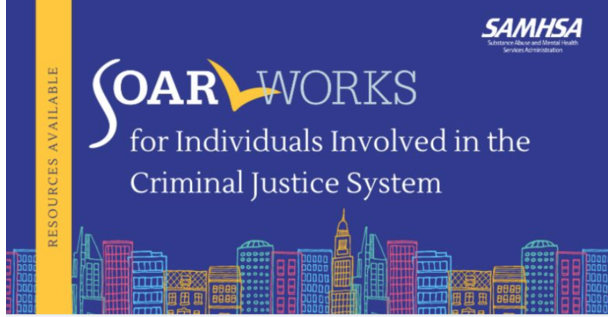


SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) Online Course: Adult Curriculum
soarworks.prainc.com

👍 🗨️ 70 • 3 Comments

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🔗 **CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROFESSIONALS:** This issue brief, developed by the SAMHSA SOAR TA Center, discusses best practices for integrating benefit options with community reentry strategies for people with serious mental illness, co-occurring disorders, or both to promote post-release success. Read more 🔗 <https://lnkd.in/esVHqCg>



SOAR Works for Individuals Involved in the Criminal Justice System
soarworks.prainc.com

👍 🗨️ 35 • 2 Comments

Federal Updates

New HUD Resource: Maximizing Income for Rapid Rehousing Participants

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has released a new resource, *COVID-19 Homeless System Response: Maximizing Income for Rapid Rehousing Participants During COVID-19*. This document provides multiple ways Rapid Rehousing programs should support participants with their income goals, highlighting the importance of individualized guidance and support offered by knowledgeable case managers. The resource highlights the SOAR model, specifically the *SOAR Employment Conversation Guide* and how SOAR can be used in coordinated entry systems.

SSA Announces New Online Video Hearings

SSA has announced a new service for people awaiting a hearing decision. In addition to telephone hearings, SSA will now offer the opportunity for an online video hearing using the Microsoft Teams platform. This new, free service will allow applicants and their representatives to participate in the hearing from anywhere they have access to a camera-enabled smartphone, tablet, or computer. This stable and secure online platform allows the Social Security judge to see and interact with applicants and their representatives just like an in-person hearing, while maintaining privacy of the claimant's information. Other hearing experts, such as medical or vocational experts, may participate as well.

SSA Resumes Hearings-Related Workloads

In late August, SSA resumed specific hearings-related workloads that had been paused since mid-March, including continuing disability reviews, age-18 redetermination hearings and decisions, and non-disability hearings and decisions.

In addition, SSA recognizes that the COVID-19 pandemic may give rise to circumstances that may constitute good cause for missing an appeal deadline or failing to appear at a scheduled hearing. On August 31, 2020, SSA provided guidance to hearings offices that administrative law judges may resume issuing dismissals for late-filing of a hearing or failure to appear at a hearing. To ensure hearing offices are appropriately issuing these types of dismissals, hearing offices will now develop the record for good cause by issuing a *Request to Show Cause for Late Filing or Failure to Appear* notice. In addition to this added step for late-filing/failure-to-appear dismissals, SSA temporarily expanded its traditional in-line quality reviews of hearing dispositions to focus on ensuring that dismissals are policy-compliant.

For more information about SOAR and appeals, contact [SOAR Liaison Pamela Heine](#).



The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) Technical Assistance (TA) Center is sponsored by SAMHSA, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Disclaimer: The SAMHSA SOAR Technical Assistance Center is sending this eNews with support from SAMHSA, HHS. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official view of HHS or SAMHSA.

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